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ABSTRACT

Black, Hispanic, and Chinese Americans resisted oppression in 19th century United States by maintaining a strong family unit. As second class citizens, these groups were denied rights of citizenship and protection of the law. They experienced not only economic exploitation, but political and social domination as well. Responses to cultural assaults on these racial/ethnic groups were varied. In some cases they adopted patterns of behavior in direct contradiction to the expectations and desires of the dominant group. For example, black women withdrew from field labor and focused on domestic life after slavery. Chinese families used the discriminatory legal system to their favor. Chinese laborers could not bring spouses to the United States nor could they marry whites. However, when the 1882 San Francisco earthquake destroyed municipal records, many Chinese claimed American birth and thus became eligible to bring relatives (either real or fabricated) into the country. Hispanic women sacrificed and modified traditional norms to maintain family cohesion by becoming part of the labor force in answer to a wage labor system that did not provide the man with enough money to support his family. (Author/KC)

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Survival as a Form of Resistance: Minority Women and the Maintenance of Families

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In response to social changes of the past two decades, the study of the American family is slowly being revised. Criticized for its static view of family life and for projecting a narrow model of family structure and functioning, the sociology of the family has gradually begun to acknowledge the wide diversity of family forms that have always existed in American society. The model of family which dominated the field for most of this century was based on the norms and values of middle class, Anglo life. Its preeminence has had a particularly deleterious effect on the study of families which varied by social class, race or ethnicity from the dominant norm. In 1968 the following observation was made about the literature on Black families:

> ..."the Negro family as an institution has been virtually ignored by students of group life in America. The principle reason for this failure seems to be associated with the fact that studies in this area, like those in other areas of human life, are highly influenced by the political, religious, and philosophical ideologies of the authors, as by any concern with social relevance or any more general spirit of scientific inquiry. Scholars have been steered away from the study of the Negro family by their own European ethnocentrism and by the nature of their professional disciplines. When they have treated the Negro family, they have done so in a negativistic and distorted fashion for the same reasons. (Billingsley, 1968:197)

Over a decade later Staples and Mirande, in their review of the literature on minority families state the following:

> Allen (1978) has identified three ideological perspectives in research done on the Black family: the cultural deviant approach; the cultural equivalent approach and the cultural variant approach. The cultural deviant approach viewed Black families as pathological. The cultural equivalent perspective conferred a legitimacy upon Black families as long as their family lifestyles conformed to middle-class family norms. The cultural variant orientation depicted Black families as different, but functional family forms

> ... The cultural variant perspective, which views the Black family as a culturally unique, legitimate unit, continues to be underrepresented in mainstream journals. (Staples and Mirande, 1980:889)

Similar statements have been made about the research on Chicano and Mexican-American families.

> Up until 1970... "The bulk of research at the end of the previous decade could be characterized not only as negative and pejorative, but as lacking in empirical support. Montiel (1970:62) has noted that such studies were based on a pathological model which 'is inherently incapable of defining normal behavior and this automatically lables all Mexican and Mexican-American people as sick--only in degree of sickness do they vary.' During the 1960's and early 70's a number of Chicano scholars sought to refute many of the stereotypes..and to present a more sympathetic 'inside' view of la familia. (Staples and Mirande, 1980:892)

Studies of the Chinese-American family reflect another problem which has shaped the research on racial-ethnic people.

> Studies of Chinese-American families start by examining traditional Chinese family values, which are assumed to be the main determiners of family patterns. Generational differences in these patterns are interpreted as evidence of gradual acculturation toward Western values and norms. The cultural approach stresses the uniqueness of the Chinese-American family and depicts it as a more or less statientity subject only to unidirectional change toward the dominant ideal. (Glenn, 1981:3)

This emphasis on culture, accompanied by a tendency to ignore the social, economic and political conditions which racial ethnic minorties faced in this country is characteristic of the research on Chicano families as well. Mirande (1977) has pointed out that the tendency has been to project a stereotype of the Mexican-American family as rigidly patriarchal, and dominated by the principle of Machismo. This has led, in Mirande's view, to a preoccupation with the psychopathology of the Mexican American family. "La Chicana,"

therefore is projected as a "quiet, saintly virginal creature who honors and obeys her husband at any cost." (Staples and Mirande, 1980: 893)

In contrast to the emphasis on traditional culture in the research on Chinese and Chicano families, the research on Afro-American families has (until quite recently), been almost devoid of a cultural perspective. That should not be surprising since most writers and researchers assumed that African slaves had lost all traces of their traditional culture as a result of the middle passage. Thus, for a long time, Afro-American family patterns were thought to be reflective of the economic political and social conditions which either facilitated or inhibited the ability of Blacks to adopt middle class, "Anglo" family patterns.

The cultural approach, which dominates in the case of the Chinese and Chicano; and the institutional approach, as utilized with Blacks are both products of the assimilationist model of race relations. Like the nuclear family model, the assimilationist model of race relations assumed a norm, not incidently a middle-class white norm, toward which all groups would converge over time. Chinese and Mexican American families were seen as problematic not only because their family patterns differed so greatly from that of the dominant group but also because their strong adherence to traditional culture inhibited their assimilation into white middle class society. In the case of Blacks, the failure to assimilate, while seen as reflective of institutional and economic barriers such as discrimination and poverty, still results in a pejorative view of Black family life because it accepts the view of middle class white society as normative for all Americans.

The social upheavals of the 60's and 70's rocked the foundations of the assimilationist perspective and, in conjunction with the second wave of the women's movement, called into question many of our most basic assumptions about the American family. Marxist feminist theory developed in an attempt to explain the second class status of women in our society and to relate the study of women's roles to the political economy of the society. Essentially, Marxist feminists have focused upon the interaction of patriarchy and capitalism to explain the subordination of women in American society. In so doing however, they have conceptualized the family as a key unit in the maintenance and reproduction of the capitalist economic system. (Glenn, 1982)

At the same time, a new model for examining race relations in American society was introduced: the internal colonial model. The internal colonial model, as developed by Blauner (1972), is an attempt to explain the persistence of economic exploitation and racial discrimination which has been characteristic of the history of non-white minorities in the United States. He makes a critical distinction between colonized and immigrant minorities, identifying five circumstances "that are universal to the colonial situation and characterized the experience of people of color in the United States." They are: (1) forced, involuntary entry, (2) unfree labor or restrictions of labor mobility, (3) cultural assaults, (4) racism, and (5) political governance of the colonized by the colonizer. (Blauner, 1972)

Though neither model addresses the particular situations of minority women, both, as Glenn (1982) has pointed out, seek to explain

the persistence of inequality and "see gender/race stratification as dynamically related to the organization of the economy. Thus each implies an historical perspective, one that traces changes in relations between dominant and subordinate groups in relation to the development of capitalism." (Glenn, 1982)

Cultural Assaults on Racial-Ethnic Families

This paper accepts the premise that Blacks, Chicano/Mexicans and Chinese are among the colonized minorities in the United States and share a history of economic exploitation and racial discrimination. They were incorporated into this country as part of a colonial labor force, receiving low wages or no wages to work for long hours under hazardous conditions in the development of the country's economic infrastructure. (Higginbotham, 1982) The family lives of these groups, and the lives of the women, have developed within a context of oppression. As second class citizens and aliens, Blacks, Chicanos, and Chinese were denied the rights and privileges of citizenship, protections of the law, and were subjected to separate and unequal treatment. They experienced, therefore, not only economic exploitation but political and social domination as well. Blauner(1972:67) states the issues in this way:

> The colonial situation differs from the class situation of capitalism precisely in the importance of culture as an instrument of domination. ...Therefore, imperial regimes attempt, consciously or unwittingly, either to destroy the cultures of colonized people or, when it is more convient, to exploit them for the purposes of more efficient control and economic profit. As Mina Caulfield has put it, imperialism exploits the cultures of the colonized as much as it does their labor.

As a colonized people, Blacks, Chicanos and Chinese in the United States have experienced what Blauner (1972) and Caulfield (1974) re-

fer to as cultural assaults; benign and systematic attacks on the institutions and forms of social organization that are fundamental to the maintenance and flourishing of a group's culture. This paper argues that the growth and development of the family as a social institution among racial/ethnics were virtually denied by the economic and social policies of the dominant society in the 18th and 19th Centuries. The labor systems into which these three groups of racial ethnics were introduced were designed to extract maximum profit from individual laborers. Family groups were recognized only to the extent that they facilitated the growth of profits. And, as a social institution, the family at best was ignored but more often was subjected to assaults that threatened its very existence. The maintenance of the family institution among Blacks, Chicanos and Chinese during this period is testimony to the ability of racial ethnic men and women to resist oppression.

The family is most frequently recognized as the major social institution in the maintenance and perpetuation of culture. In many societies, and in particular in 18th Century China, Mexico and in most African societies, family was an important source of legal and political power. In all societies it is the major instrument for organizing male-female relationships and relationships among different generations. In addition, as the primary mechanism for socialization, it teaches children their place in society and is critical in the reproduction of social relations. In 18th and 19th Century America the role of the family was even more expansive than it is today, since many of the functions which are now performed by a variety of 'new' social institutions were then performed within the family.

Because of its vast potential for effecting all areas of a group's social life, the family, in a colonial situation, becomes an important institution for colonizer control.

The need for the colonizer to control or manage the growth and development of the family institution among the colonized suggests an alternative conceptualization of family; one where it is seen not merely as a conservative institution, retaining and transmitting traditional values, but as an active force in which culture is created. This conceptualization of family is suggested by Caulfield (1974) in her argument that families can be sources of resistance to colonization. As a central unit in the reproduction of social relations, the families of the colonized could threaten the maintenance of the colonial system of authority if children are socialized to question or criticize it. According to Caulfield (1974:73)

> We must look not only at the ways in which the colonizer acts to break down family solidarity but also the ways in which the colonized -- women, men and children -- act to maintain, consolidate and build anew the basic units in which children can grow and be enculturated in the values and relationships that are independent of and in opposition to the imperial culture. (Caulfield, 1974:73)

The maintenance of families and of sets of values which support, promote and encourage family life among Afro-Americans, Chicanos and Chinese Americans during the 18th and 19th Centuries is testimony to the ability of these men, women, and children to resist oppression. Faced with a political economy that denied their rights to have families and to utilize the family institution as a basis for participation in the social order, they created alternative structures which allowed them to have a degree of cultural autonomy.

Reproductive Labor Among Dominant Culture Families in Early America

In a very short time after the initial settlement of the American colonies it became apparant that families would be a cornerstone in the development of the country. Thus, as early as 1619, the London Company began planning for the importation of single women into the colonies to marry colonists, form families and provide the basis for a permanent settlement. The objective, was:

> to make the men more setled and lesse moveable who by defect thereof (as is credibly reported) stay there but to gette some thing and then return for England..' Such instability, would 'breed a dissolucon, and so an overthrow of the Plantation.' (Spruill, 1972:8)

In accordance with this recognition of the importance of families, The London Company provided the economic basis necessary for the development of the family as a viable and essential institution within the nascent social structure of the colonies. Shares of land were alloted for both husbands and wives in recognition of the fact that "in a new plantation it is not known whether man or woman be the most necessary." (cited in Spruill, 1972:9)

This pattern of providing an economic base designed to attract, promote and maintain families was followed in the other colonial settlements. Lord Baltimore of Maryland

> offered to each adventurer a hundred acres for himself, a hundred for his wife, fifty for each child, a hundred for each man servant, and sixty for a woman servant. Women heads of families were treated just as men. (Spruill, 1972:11)

In Georgia, which appealed to a poorer class for settlers than did Virginia or Maryland

> ...among the advantages they offered men to emigrate was the gainful employment of their wives and children. (Spruill, 1972:16)

Thus, in its founding, American society built into its legal, economic and social structure a variety of measures designed to promote the growth of family life, among white colonists. The reception colonial families found in the United States contrasts sharply with the lack of attention given to the families of racial ethnics whose presence was equally as important for the growth of the nation but whose political economic, legal and social status was quite different.

In colonial America, white women were seen as vital contributors to the stabilization and growth of society. They were therefore accorded some legal and economic recognition through a patriarchal family structure.

> While colonial life remained hard, women in America probably had better health, more favorable living conditions, higher status, and greater opportunity to improve their lot than did those who remain in Europe. American women married earlier, were less restricted by dowries, and often had legal protection for themselves and their children in antenuptial contracts. (Kennedy, 1979:7)

Throughout the colonial period, women's reproductive labor in the family was integrally tied to the daily operation of small scale family farms or artisan's shops. According to Kessler-Harris (1981:22):

> A surprising amount of flexibility existed in the tasks people did. Although women's efforts usually focused on work in and around the home, it was not unusual for a woman to pitch hay at harvest time or to plow in the spring. Similarly, men spent twilight hours alongside their wives at the loom, and through the Eighteenth Century, boys and girls, were trained to spin and weave. A division of labor by sex, though common, was not rigid. (Kessler-Harris, 1981:22)

This flexibility of tasks and the centrality of family in a preindustrial economy emphasized the importance of women's contribution to both the protection of the family and the growth of society.

Between the end of the Eighteenth Century and the beginning of the Nineteenth what was labeled, "the modern American family," developed. The growth of industrialization and an urban middle class along with the accumulation of agrarian wealth among Southern planters, had two results which are particularly pertinent to this discussion. First, class differences developed and with that, distinctions among women.

> As Southern planters acquired vast fields and many slaves to work them, skin color began to indicate caste among free white women: planters' females were protected from the sun, in contrast to "poor white" women, whose men still required their work in the fields. (Kennedy, 1979:10)

Second, the organization of industrial labor resulted in the separation of home and family and the assignment to women of a separate sphere of activity focused upon childcare and home maintenance.

> One of the hallmarks of the emerging modern family in the early 19th Century was the sharply differentiated roles or functions assigned by social custom to wife and husband. Women's activities were increasingly confined to the care of children, the nurturing of husband, and the physical maintenance of the home. Moreover, it was not unusual to refer to women as the "angels of the house," for they were said to be the moral guardians of the family. They were responsible for the ethical and spiritual character as well as the comfort and tranquility of the home. In that role they were the acknowledged superiors of men. (Degler, 1980:26)

This separate sphere of domesticity and piety has been labeled by some scholars as the "Cult of True Womanhood," (Welter, 1964) and its existence reflected the class differences that were developing during this period.

For middle class women, household labor was transformed from economic productivity as a member of the family group to home maintenance, childcare and moral uplift as an isolated individual who supervised some servants.

> Sanctifying the household..did not lessen the amount of physical labor performed within it. It did relegate the continuing hard work to second place, transforming the public image of the household by the 1820's and 1830's from a place where productive labor was performed to one whose main goals were the preservation of virtue and morality... Many of the "well-run" homes of the pre-Civil War period seem to have been the dwelling of overworked women. Short of household help, without modern conveniences, and frequently pregnant, these women complained bitterly of their harsh existence. (Kessler-Harris, 1981:39)

The separation of work and family had a different impact on working class women who often "followed their work into the marketplace," (Kessler-Harris, 1981:46) taking on wage work in the developing industries in the cities.

> Wage scales made it impossible for most working class families to survive on a single income; therefore, sons and daughters worked outside the home while wives either went out to work or supplemented family income within the household. (Kennedy, 1979:16)

Working class women faced the difficult task of managing a household on extremely limited budgets and with few conveniences.

> Clothes had to be made, then made over again after the cloth had worn through. Shopping could be an endless haggle for stale bread and half-rotten vegetables. (Kessler-Harris, 1981:46)

For those working class women who remained in rural areas, household labor changed very little, remaining harsh and without the most basic convenience of electricity and running water throughout the 19th Century.

Nevertheless, the existence of the "cult of true womanhood" which dominated Nineteenth Century notions of the family, maintained that woman's proper place was within the home and that ladyhood was an ideal towards which <u>all</u> women should aspire.

> Working class women were introduced to a confused set of aspirations: "mother of civilization" gave way

> to "lady" as the accepted role for "true" women in the first half of the nineteenth century...while industrialization widened the gulf between middle-class and working class women, the same phenomenon did not sharpen class perceptions; by presenting ladyhood as the goal for all women, society insured the commitment of working-class women (and men) to the struggle for upward mobility. (Kennedy, 1979:17-18)

The existence in the dominant culture of a separate sphere for middle class women and of ideology which suggested that this was appropriate for all women, was another way in which dominant culture women's family roles were socially acknowledged and protected. Notwithstanding the personal constraints placed on women's development, the notion of separate spheres promoted the growth and stability of family life among the white middle class and became the basis for working class efforts to achieve wages which would permit their wives to remain at home. Also, as has been pointed out, women's positions improved in some ways as a result of this notion of separate spheres.

> ...within the home women did gain a new recognition and in the process broke the ancient hierarchy that had assigned superiority to men in all spheres of activity. Domesticity, in short, was an alternative to patriarchy, both in intention and in fact. By asserting a companionate role for women, it implicitly denied patriarchy.
>
> Moreover, by confining women's attention to the home, (it) reflected an improvement in the material situation of women. No longer were women expected to work outside the house...commercial manufacturing increasingly produced many of the necessities that had once been women's obligation to make at home. (Degler, 1980:28)

Whether one agrees with this entire assessment of the impact of domesticity or not, it is clear that it led to improvements in the conditions of household labor by eliminating some of the back-breaking tasks which colonial farm women faced.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth Centuries, American society

accorded considerable importance to the development and maintenance of white families. As primary laborers in the reproduction and maintenance of family life, white women were acknowledged and accorded the privileges and protections deemed socially appropriate to their family roles. This argument does not deny the fact that the patriarchal family denied these women many rights and privileges and seriously constrained their growth and development. Because, women gained social recognition mostly through their membership in families, their rights were few and privileges subject to the will of the male head of the household. Nevertheless, the recognition of women's reproductive labor as an essential building block of the family, combined with a view of the family as the cornerstone of the nation, distinguishes the white, dominant culture experiences from that of racial-ethnics.

Reproductive Labor Among Racial Ethnics in Early America

As pointed out above, racial ethnic families experienced cultural assaults as a direct result of the organization of the labor systems in which they participated. Since Blacks, Chicanos and Chinese were brought to this country to meet the need for a cheap and exploitable labor force, little attention was given to their family and community life except as it related to their economic productivity. Their labor, and not the existence or maintenance of their families was essential to the building of the nation. Thus, they were denied the social structural supports necessary to make their families a vital element in the social order and family membership did not provide a means of access to participation in the wider society.

Among scholars of slavery there have been considerable debate as to the "harshness" of American slavery and the degree to which slaves were permitted or encouraged to form families. Nevertheless, it is widely acknowledged, that the existence of slave families was contingent upon the goodwill and economic circumstances of the master. In other words, slaves married and formed families but these nuclear family groupings existed only until "death or buckra (master) part you." (cited in Degler, 1980:114) It is generally estimated that about 32% of all recorded slave marriages were disrupted by sale; about 45% by death of a spouse, about 10% by choice and the remaining 13% were not disrupted at all. (Blassingame, 1972:90-92) In contrast to whites, who were encouraged and supported in the formation and maintenance of families, African slaves, quickly learned that they had a very limited degree of control over the formation and the maintenance of their marriages and could not be assured of keeping their children with them. The threat of disruption was perhaps the most direct and pervasive cultural assault on families which African slaves encountered. Nevertheless, a number of different aspects of the slave system reinforced the "subject" nature of slave family life. In contrast to African traditions and the Euro-American patterns of the period, slave men were not the main providers or authority figure in the family. The mother-child tie was most basic and of greatest interest to the slave owner because it was crucial to the reproduction of the labor force. In addition to the lack of authority and economic roles granted to the husband-father in the slave family, use of the rape of women slaves as a weapon of terror and control further undermined the integrity of the slave family.

> It would be a mistake to regard the institutionalized pattern of rape during slavery as an expression of white men's sexual urges, otherwise stifled by the specter of white womanhood's chastity... Rape was a weapon of dominaiton, a weapon of repression, whose covert goal was to extinguish slave women's will to resist, and in the process, to demoralize their men. (Davis, 1981:23-24)

In the face of these assaults, slave men and women had the difficult task of preserving the human and family ties that would ultimately give them a reason for living, and of socializing their children to see themselves as something other than "pickaninny's". Therefore, it is important that historians and scholars of slavery have, in recent years, unearthed data which provides insights into the nature of the slave's family life. As Davis (1981) has argued, the only labor in which the slave engaged that could not be directly appropriated by the slave owner for his profit, was labor on behalf of the family. Thus it provides a good indicator of the ways in which slaves maintained a degree of cultural autonomy and resisted the annihilation of their family life.

Herbert Gutman (1976) in his landmark study, The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925 provides extensive evidence of the ways in which slaves expressed a unique Afro-American culture through their family practices. He provides data on naming patterns and the maintenance of kinship ties among slaves that flies in the face of the dominant ideology of the period which suggested that slaves were immoral and had little concern or appreciation for family life.

For example, in a system which denied the father authority over his family, slaves boys were frequently named after their fathers. Girls were not named after their mothers to the same degree, but in general, children were named after blood relatives and that was one

way of maintaining family ties. Gutman has also suggested that after emancipation a number of slaves took the names of former owners as a way of reestablishing family ties that had been disrupted earlier. On plantation after plantation, Gutman found considerable evidence of the building and maintenance of extensive kinship ties among slaves. Even in instances where slave families had been disrupted, slaves, in new communities reconstituted kinds of family and kin ties that were characteristic throughout the South. These patterns included a belief in the importance of marriage as a longterm commitment rules of exogamy which excluded marriage between first cousins and acceptance of women who had children outside of marriage, among other things. Kinship networks were an important source of resistance to the capitalist organization of labor which treated the individual slave, and not the family as the unit of labor. (Caulfield, 1974)

Another interesting indicator of the slaves maintenance of some degree of cultural autonomy has been pointed out by Wright (1981) in her discussion of slave housing. Up until the early 1800's, slaves were often permitted to build their own housing according to their own designs and taste. During that period, housing built in an African style was quite common in the slave quarters. By 1830, however, slaveowners had begun to control the design and arrangement of slave housing and had introduced a degree of comformity and regularity to it that left little room for the slave's personalization of his home. Nevertheless, slaves did use some of their own techniques in construction and often hid them from their masters.

> Even the floors, which usually consisted only of tamped earth, were evidence of a hidden African tradition: slaves cooked clay over a fire, mixing in ox blood or cow dung, and then poured it in place to make hard dirt floors almost like asphalt.. In slave houses, in contrast to other crafts, these signs of skill and tra-

dition would then be covered over. (Wright, 1981:48)

Housing is important in discussions of family because its design reflects social and cultural attitudes toward family life. The housing which slaveowners provided for their slaves reflected a view of Black family life consistent with the stereotypes of the period. And, while the existence of slave families was acknowledged, it was certainly not nurtured. Thus, cabins were crowded, often containing more than one family and there were no provisions for privacy. Slaves had to create their own.

> Slave couples hung up old clothes or quilts to establish boundaries; others built more substantial partitions from scrap wood. Parents sought to establish sexual privacy from their children. A few ex-slaves described modified trundle beds designed to hide parental love-making... Even in one room cabins, sexual segregation was carefully organized. (Wright, 1981:50)

One of the important aspects of the slave family, particularly for slave women was the kind of equality that developed among men and women. Slave women were forced to work as equals beside their men in the fields, but men and women also worked as equals in the domestic sphere.

> Within the confines of their family and community life, therefore, Black people managed to accomplish a magnificent feat. They transformed that negative equality which emanated from the equal oppression they suffered as slaves into a positive quality: the egalitarianism characterizing their social relations. (Davis, 1981:18)

Egalitarianism also characterized the social relations of Black men and women after slavery. In their first real opportunity to establish family life beyond the controls and constraints imposed by a slavemaster, family life among Black sharecroppers changed radically. Most women, particularly the wives and daughters of able bodied men withdrew from the field labor and concentrated on their

domestic duties in the home. Husbands took primary responsibility for the fieldwork and for relations with the owners, signing contracts on behalf of the family, etc. Black women were severly criticized by whites for removing themselves from field labor because they were seen to be aspiring to a model of womanhood that was inappropriate to them. However, this reorganization of female labor represented an attempt on the part of Black men and women to protect women from some of the abuses of the slave system and to thus secure their family life. It was a response to the particular set of circumstances that the newly freed slaves faced and not a reaction to the lives of their former masters.

> ...the share cropping family that lived and worked together actually represented an adaptation, or response, to post-war conditions rather than a clinging to old ways. This development, initiated so boldly by Blacks was particularly significant because it contrasted sharply with trends characteristic of late nineteenth Century American society in general. (Jones, 1980:35)

Jone's (1980) argument is that at a time when the industrial development was introducing a labor system that divided male and female labor, confining women to a cult of domesticity, the freed Black family was establishing a pattern of joint work and complementary of tasks between males and females that was reminiscent of the preindustrial families. Unfortunately, these former slaves did this without the institutional supports that white farm families had had and in the midst of a sharecropping system that deprived them of economic independence.

For the majority of Chinese people in the United States during the Nineteenth Century, the formation of a family was virtually impossible. Tom, a respondent in Nee and Nee's (1973:80) book Longtime Californ' says: "..one thing about Chinese men in America

was you had to be either a merchant or a big gambler, have lot of side money, to have a family here. A working man, an ordinary man, just can't!"

Working in the United States was a means to gain support for one's family with an end of obtaining sufficient capital to return to China and purchase land. The practice of sojourning was reinforced by laws preventing Chinese laborers from becoming citizens, by the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 which barred the entry of Chinese laborers and their relatives, subsequent renewals of the act, and the Immigration Act of 1924 which stopped immigration from Asia altogether. Chinese laborers who arrived prior to 1882 could not bring their wives and were prevented, by law, from marrying whites. Thus, it is likely that the number of Chinese American families might have been negligible had it not been for the San Francisco earthquake and fire (1906) which destroyed all municipal records, and for the ingenuity and persistence of the Chinese people. Since relatives of citizens were permitted entry, American born Chinese (real and claimed) would visit China, report the birth of a son, and thus create an entry slot. "Years later the slot could be used by a relative or purchased. The purchasers were called "paper sons."

The high concentration of males in the Chinese community prior to 1920 resulted in a split household family.

> In the split household family, production is separated from other functions and is carried out by a member living far from the rest of the household. The rest, --consumption, reproduction and socialization-- are carried out by the wife and other relatives from the home village... The split household form makes possible maximum exploitation of the worker...
>
> The labor of prime-age male workers can be bought relatively cheaply, since the cost of reproduction and family maintenance is borne partially by unpaid subsistence work of women and old people in the home village." (Glenn, 1981:14-15)

The women who were in the United States during this period were wives and daughters of merchants and a large percentage were prostitutes. Hirata (1979) has suggested that Chinese prostitution was an important element in helping to maintain the split household family. In conjunction with laws prohibiting intermarriage, Chinese prostitution helped men avoid long term relationships with women in the United States and insured that the bulk of their meager earnings would continue to support the family at home. As prostitutes in the United States, Chinese women were exploited in support of a labor system that exploited their men.

We do not know a great deal about the lives of wives who remained at home in China. We do know, however, that Nineteenth Century Chinese women were members of a patriarchal family system in which a daughter had little value. Girls were considered only temporary members of their father's family since, when they married, they became members of their husband's families. Because of their low status, girls were often sold by poor parents to serve as prostitutes, concubines or servants. This saved the family the expense of raising her and was a source of income. For most girls however, marriages were arranged and families sought useful family connections through this process.

With the development of a sojourning pattern in the United States, Chinese women in those regions of China where this was more prevalent might be sold and become prostitutes in the United States or married off to men whom they saw only once or twice in the twenty or thirty year period he was sojourning in the United States. As his wife, she insured that a portion of the meager wages he earned would be returned to his family. This arrangement required consider-

able sacrifice and adjustment on the part of wives who remained in China and upon those who joined their husbands after a long separation.

Maxine Hong Kinston (1979) tells the story of the unhappy meeting of her Aunt, Moon Orchid, with her husband from whom she had been separated from thirty years.

> For thirty years she had been receiving money from him from America. But she had never told him that she wanted to come to the United States. She waited for him to suggest it, but he never did...(Kingston, 1977:144)

His response to seeing her when she arrived unexpectedly was to say:

> 'Look at her. She'd never fit into an American household. I have important American guests who come inside my house to eat.' He turned to Moon Orchid, 'You can't talk to them. You can barely talk to me.'
>
> Moon Orchid was so ashamed, she held her hands over her face. She wished she could also hide her dappled hands. Her husband looked like one of the ghosts passing the car windows, and she must look like a ghost from China. They had indeed entered the land of ghosts, and they had become ghosts. (Ibid, 178)

Despite these handicaps, Chinese people collaborated to establish the opportunity to form families and settle in the United States. In some cases it took as long as three generations for a child to be born on United States soil.

> In one typical history, related by a 21 year old college student, great-grandfather arrived in the States in the 1890's as a "paper son" and worked for about 20 years as a laborer. He then sent for the grandfather, who worked alongside great-grandfather in a small business for several years. Great-grandfather subsequently returned to China, leaving grandfather to run the business and send remittance. In the 1940's, grandfather sent for father; up to this point, none of the wives had left China. Finally, in the late 1950's, father returned to China and brought his wife back with him. Thus, after nearly 70 years, the first child was born in the United States. (Glenn, 1981:14)

The cultural assaults directed towards Chicano families in the Nineteenth Century differed somewhat from that of Chinese and Afro-Americans because they were indigeneous people who were primarily rural and who, as a result of war were, incorporated into another country. The treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed in 1848 and granted American citizenship to Mexicans living in what is now called the Southwest. American takeover resulted in the gradual displacement of Mexicans from the land and their incorporation into a colonial labor force. (Barrera, 1979)

In the rural environment, the Chicana's work was largely confined to the home, but homemaking involved a wide range of tasks.

> For country women, work was seldom a salaried job. More often it was the work of growing and preparing food, of making adobes and plastering houses with mud, or making their children's clothes for school and teaching them the hymns and prayers of the church, or delivering babies and treating sicknesses with herbs and patience. In almost every town there were one or two women who, in addition to working in their own homes, served other families in the community as curanderas (healers), parteras (midwives), and schoolteachers. (Elasser, 1980:10)

The American conquest of Mexican lands, the introduction of a new system of labor and the loss of Chicano land through tax sales and an inability to document ownership, resulted in the gradual disappearance of this way of life. Chicano families were uprooted as the economic base for family life changed. Some women and children accompanied their men to the mines and railroad camps. However, in many cases, men were not permitted to bring their families. Women and children were left behind to subsist on the land and whatever portion of the husband's meager earnings were not tied up in the system of debt peonage that frequently developed in these camps.

By the 1880's there are records of Chicana's working as laundresses and domestics in urban areas and as agricultural workers as entire families entered the pattern of seasonal and migratory field work. (Barrera, 1979) The participation of Chicanas in the labor seems to be a response to the factors identifed above, one that may have contradicted with traditional family values. According to Louisa Vigil, who was born in 1890:

> The womens didn't work at that time (when she was young). The man was supposed to marry that girl and take care of her... Your grandpa never did let me work for nobody. He always had work, and we never did have really bad times. (Elasser, 1980:14)

Gradually, entire families became incorporated into the agricultural labor market in response to both the extremely low wages paid to agricultural laborers and the preferences of employers. By engaging all able-bodied family members in the work, people could hope to increase their earnings to a level close to subsistence for the entire group. This arrangement while, bringing families together, did not decrease the hardships which Chicanas had to confront in raising their families. We may infer something about the rigors of farm life from Jessie Lopez de la Cruz' description of the workday of migrant farm laborers in the 1940's. Work conditions in the 1890's were at least as difficult, if not worse.

> We always went where the women and men were going to work, because if it were just the men working it wasn't worth going out there because we wouldn't earn enough to support a family... We would start around 6:30 a.m. and work for four or five hours, then walk home and eat and rest until about three-thirty in the afternoon when it cooled off. We would go back and work until we couldn't see. Then I'd clean up the kitchen. I was doing the housework and working out in the fields and taking care of two children. (Goldman, 1981:119-120)

These data tend to suggest that Chicanas raised their children

and maintained their families under extremely harsh conditions in both rural and urban areas, in the face of a wage labor system that was not designed to support the Chicano family. Women worked as paid laborers, as members of a family labor crew, and as domestic laborers in their own households, became the bridge that carried the family from destruction to survival.

Survival as a Form of Resistance

The question which has been central to this discussion of the family lives of Black, Chicano and Chinese families in Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century America is:

> What are the ways in which the colonized-women, men and children-act to maintain, consolidate and build anew the basic units in which children can grow and be enculturated in the values and relationships that are independent of and in opposition to the imperial culture. (Caulfield, 1974:72-73)

The answer is that for racial ethnic families during this period, the mere survival of the family was, in and of itself, a form of resistance to oppression.

This paper has sought to demonstrate that these three groups of racial-ethnic people encountered a variety of forms of cultural assaults. Their responses were also varied. In some cases they adopted patterns of behavior that were in direct contradiction to the expectations and desires of the dominant groups -- such as Black women withdrawing from field labor after slavery. In others, they used a discriminatory legal system in conjunction with serendipitous natural events to create their own "family loopholes" -- such as the Chinese family's "paper sons." In still others, they sacrificed and modified traditional norms to maintain family cohesion -- such as the

movement of Chicanas into the labor force.

In this process, these groups of people taught their children the value of family life as a source of strength in the face of outside intrusion. They taught them an awareness of the struggle required to maintain and develop their families. They taught them a healthy mistrust for a system which had sought to destroy them. In sum, they taught their children that their families could survive in the face of both deliberate and benign attacks on their existence. All of these were lessons in resistance.

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